

# From Queen's Scout to undercover courier in Moscow

## THE REAL GERALD BROOKE

By the CLOSE-UP team

**T**HE confusion surrounding the release last week of Gerald Brooke, the Sheffield lecturer now back in his Finchley home from the Soviet prison camp at Potma, centres on one vital question: Was Brooke an innocent idealist, or was he something much closer to a spy?

The story of how he became involved with a Russian anti-Soviet organisation throws light on his curious television confession that he was delving into activities "close to espionage."

The story of Gerald Brooke begins in Sheffield, Yorkshire, where he was born on July 15, 1937. His father, a staunch trade unionist, was a salesman for a builder's merchant. His mother, in Brooke's own words at his trial, "deprived herself of all the necessities" in giving him the best possible education.

Marion Brooke, now widowed, passed on to her son the Methodist ideals of self-betterment that were to take him from the terraced house in Pearson Place, Sheffield, to Oxford and Moscow Universities.

Brooke's love for Russia stemmed from Dr. Walter Chapman, his old headmaster at Firth Park School, Sheffield. Chapman spotted his talent for languages and put him into a Russian language class at the school when he was only 12.

Chapman recalled: "I remember Gerald well. He was bright, intelligent and rather extrovert."

Brooke joined the Scouts; Sheffield's 46th St. Paul's Norton Lees troop. By February 1954 he was a Queen's Scout, being chosen to attend the Eighth Jamboree in Canada in 1955.

He left home for London in 1956 to take a three-year course at the London University School of Slavonic and East European

Studies. After taking a B.A. degree in Russian with honours, he spent a year in Moscow on a British Council scholarship.

In Moscow he did post-graduate research on a 19th-century Russian writer. Compared with Russian students, Brooke and other Englishmen had high grants and were allowed to move about reasonably freely.

Some of the English students found themselves being followed when they moved about Moscow; strangely enough, this rarely happened to Brooke. One of the things he particularly enjoyed during his visit was skiing on the outskirts of Moscow.

Brooke's year in Moscow would have made him aware of other more sinister aspects of Russian life. Every student received a Foreign Office briefing before they set off, warning them about the K.G.B.

And in their first week there the students were already talking among themselves about the men who trailed them round the streets—occasionally so obviously that it seemed as if they wanted to be noticed.

The following year found him back in Britain at Oxford doing a year's Diploma of Education course. This was followed by three years teaching Russian and French at Hele's School, Souham, Exeter, acting as Scoutmaster of the school troop.

In April 1962 Brooke returned to Sheffield to marry Barbara Brown, a night-watchman's daughter. She had been working in various Sheffield branch libraries and had risen to the post of Senior Assistant in the Commerce, Science and Technology section of the city's central library.

"They got married at Hanover Chapel, a great draughty hall of a place now no longer in use," said a friend. "She wore white, and the guests were mainly friends from the chapel and Gerald's old school."

It was Brooke, who was to prove an exceptional wife. A friend of the couple told CLOSE-UP:

"There is one word that describes her perfectly: staunch. She is a very strong-willed person indeed. I have tremendous admiration for her."

From the West Country, Brooke moved to London, teaching Russian to other school-teachers at the Holborn College of Law, Languages and Commerce. His wife took a librarian's job for the London Borough of Camden.

They settled in. They bought a house with a garden in Highwood Avenue, North Finchley. Anyone visiting the house was left in no doubt as to the couple's interests: the rooms seemed to be full of bookshelves, virtually a library of books in Russian, about Russia.

But there were other books in other languages. Brooke also spoke French, German, Italian and Spanish.

By this time, Brooke, like many others in the Russian departments of schools and colleges, had learned of the N.T.S. (Popular Labour Alliance), the most active of the many political Russian émigré groups scattered throughout the world.

It is dedicated to the overthrow of the Soviet regime and to the establishment of a democratic system in Russia.

One lecturer in Russian told CLOSE-UP: "I ran up against the N.T.S. in London when I was at the London School of Economics. Naturally I made all kinds of Russian friends and through dinner parties and at seminars I came into contact with N.T.S. members."

"Nobody ever asked me directly to become an N.T.S. courier, but two or three times during conversations, people were obviously waiting for me to offer."

Brooke was approached in exactly this way. His background and reliability were checked. Someone in the organisation who knew him told us: "Gerald was never a formal member of the N.T.S. He was approached in 1965 by a sympathiser in Britain."

In Germany, CLOSE-UP was given the official N.T.S. version of what Brooke was doing for the organisation when he arrived in Moscow with his wife and a party of young tourists on April 18, 1965.

Brooke, arrested seven days after arriving in the Russian capital, had gone to Moscow on his own initiative and his own money, say the N.T.S.

"For ideological reasons he agreed to carry out certain work for N.T.S. There were three commissions: to post some letters; to give [Yurii] Konstantinov an album and toilet case in which N.T.S. materials were concealed; and to give

Yurii Titov a letter and copy of the 'Gospels'."

It was while Brooke was visiting Konstantinov, a 29-year-old medical research scientist, that three plain-clothes Russian security men called at the apartment and bundled Brooke away in a car.

Brooke was later sentenced for "subversive activities" to a year in prison and four years in a labour colony.

How far was Gerald Brooke's offence "a minor infringement" which produced "savage penalties"—the line taken by Sir Alec Douglas-Home in the Commons debate last week?

On television Brooke admitted that he had been carrying coding instructions for receiving radio signals in Russia. "They had a much more close connection with espionage than anti-Soviet literature" he said.

Whether his offence deserved the savage penalty depends on the importance of the N.T.S.

To many Russian-speaking academics the N.T.S. is best known for the material it publishes in its literary quarterly, *Grani*. These are manuscripts of novels, short stories and poems, often of the highest literary calibre, smuggled out of Russia where censorship forbids their publication.

"I was assured this was its main activity," one Russian teacher told us, "and that it met with general approval in the West."

In fact the Russian Press takes it far more seriously, making frequent claims that it is hand-in-glove with the C.I.A. and has secret agents dedicated to the infiltration of the State.

The N.T.S. has its headquarters in Paris, and a Swiss bank account for contributions. Its main publicity and publishing centre is in Frankfurt, where it enjoys political asylum.

It claims thousands of members in the West, particularly in the United States and Canada, and maintains that it is financed only by friends' and members' contributions. It says that any official C.I.A. or government money is out of the question although possibly agencies may try to subsidise their activities with the help of "private sponsors."

It claims never to have agreed to carry out intelligence work, and its main work is anti-Soviet propaganda. Two small N.T.S. radio transmitters beam Radio Free Russia for up to ten hours daily.

The N.T.S. headquarters in